

VZCZCXRO5737
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #5834/01 2641128
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 211128Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1806
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2122
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHFJSCC/COMMARFORPAC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005834

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

TREASURY PASS TO FRB SAN FRANCISCO/TERESA CURRAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAILAND UPDATE: LIFE RETURNING TO NORMAL

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The press published a "royal order" from the King appointing General Sonthi as leader of the Council for Democratic Reform. Public opinion polls have varying estimates of the popularity of the coup, but opinion in Bangkok remains positive. Whatever discontent people upcountry may feel seems to be under wraps, at least for the time being. One former assistant to DPM (and Thai Rak Thai stalwart) Suwat Liptapanlop called the coup "the best alternative to solving the political crisis" and claimed that the detained former ministers were playing cards and eating well. The anti-Thaksin auditor-general will continue to work to root out corruption, and the new Election Commission will begin preparing for local elections.

KING'S ENDORSEMENT

¶2. (C) The press published a "royal order" appointing General Sonthi Boonyaratklin as "Leader of the Council for Democratic Reform under the Constitutional Monarchy (CDRM). (A "royal order" is the normal format for appointing a high-ranking official.) The order instructs all Thai people to remain peaceful and all government officials to follow the orders of General Sonthi. This text appeared as one of the series of announcements from the CDRM, and not (or at least not yet) as a separate publication from the Palace.

Full text of royal order:

General Sonthi has reported the government under the leadership of Police LTCOL Thaksin Shinawatra had caused unprecedented conflicts, division and devastation of integrity and unity among the Thai people and that the majority of the people had had doubts about the honesty of the government due to widespread corruption and political intervention in independent organizations, thus adversely affecting and impeding political activities of the country. Despite continued efforts of many sectors, the situation has not improved and peace has not yet been restored to the country. A joint military, police and civilian group, calling itself the Council for Democratic Reform under the Constitutional Monarchy led by Gen. Sonthi has therefore seized control of the government in order to restore peace and unity to the country.

Therefore, His Majesty hereby appoints Gen. Sonthi as leader of the Council for Democratic Reform under the Constitutional

Monarchy, and calls on the Thai people to remain peaceful and all government officials to follow the orders of General Sonthi.

End text

MORE REACTIONS

13. (C) A few pro-Thaksin websites called for Thaksin supporters to rally at the Democracy Monument, but there are so far no reports of any actual rallies or public displays of support for the former PM. Am Amcit living in Khon Kaen (the heart of Thaksin country, in the Northeast) reported no signs of disturbance and no public indication of support for the deposed PM.

14. (C) The newspapers are reporting the results of a public opinion poll that shows a whopping 86.36 percent of people in the countryside approve of the coup, along with 81.6 percent of the people of Bangkok. According to another polling organization, however, only about 50-55 percent of Bangkok actually support the coup, while only about 35 percent of the people in the North and 30 percent in the Northeast do (Comment: Still, higher than we would have expected in these pro-Thaksin strongholds. End comment.) The approval numbers in the South are the highest (60-65 percent). This poll was conducted for the Army, and the results will probably not be released publicly.

15. (SBU) At the Foreign Correspondents' Club on September 20, a full house heard several prominent Thaksin critics talk about the coup and the future. They repeated the common

BANGKOK 00005834 002 OF 002

refrain of "what else could we have done?" Looking forward, several warned that Thaksin was likely to fight back. Several also commented on the prospects for another new Thai constitution. One advised that the Thai needed to get over their fixation on using constitutional reform to solve political problems. "Something else is wrong with Thai democracy."

WHAT MORE DO YOU NEED?

16. (C) When the CDRM took over on Tuesday night, it disbanded the Cabinet and the Parliament, and terminated the Constitution. A debate has ensued about how and whether various independent agencies set up by the now-defunct Constitution should function. The CDRM today announced that the State Audit Commission was dissolved, but the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) would continue to exist to investigate official corruption. Auditor-General Jaruvan Maintaka was nearly removed from her job last year, when technical problems with her appointment were exploited by politicians allegedly unhappy with her investigative zeal. Jaruvan was a cause-celebre and her case was seen as one of the early proxy battles between Thaksin and the King. The OAG announced it would continue to investigate the cases of official corruption which occurred while Thaksin was prime minister. (Comment: This may be seen as a warning shot across Thaksin's bow, implying a threat to continue pursuing corruption cases that could target him or his close associates.)

17. (C) The CDRM also announced that the recently-named Election Commissioners will continue to work, in the first instance by organizing local elections "as authorized by relevant laws."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

18. (U) Press reports that two former ministers, Newin

Chidchob and Yongyuth Tiypairat, have turned themselves in to the CDRM as requested. Both of them were viewed as "dirty tricks" experts for the PM and were particularly unpopular.

19. (C) Poloff lunched with several beneficiaries of our International Visitors program today, one of whom had worked for DPM Suwat Liptapanlop until Tuesday's coup. Asked about the coup, the former aide said it was "the best alternative to resolving the political crisis." Poloff expressed concerns about the status of members of TRT who were being detained by the CDRM. Our contact said, with a notable lack of sympathy for his former colleagues, that there was no need to worry about them; they were all old friends who were playing cards together and eating well.

BOYCE